



SELECTION OF LETTERS

FROM

DISTINGUISHED INDIAN STATESMEN AND OTHERS,

REGARDING

MY SERVICES DURING THE REBELLION

OF 1857.

BY WILLIAM TAYLER,

LAIE COMMISSIONER OF PATNA.

FIRST SERIES



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EXTRACT of LETTER from COL. BLANE, *Military Secretary*
to the *Governor-General of India.*

January 19th, 1867.

MY DEAR TAYLER,—

* * * * *

I had a very long conversation with Sir John on the various points to which you allude, and I think one thing is certain, that so far as his own personal feelings are concerned, it would have given him very sincere pleasure to forward your memorial. He thinks, however, that it is a matter which would have to be considered in Council, and for that reason he would advise you not to bring it forward in this country.

I have read your memorial, of course; it appears quite unanswerable, and makes out one of the strongest cases it is possible to conceive.

* * * * *

Ever yours,

Most sincerely,

SEYMOUR BLANE.

LETTER *from* SIR JAMES ELPHINSTONE, BART.

*Logie Elphinstone, Pitcastle, N. B.,
Monday, Dec. 9th, 1867.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter and the pamphlets reached me on my return here on Saturday. I have read the latter carefully, and I took much interest in your previous statement.

Unfortunately, I am not in Parliament, otherwise I would have offered to have brought the matter before the House, if you could not find a better man to do it.

There is material in these papers to make a case that could not be resisted, and at the same time to expose the imbecility of the local Bengal Government.

I think the usage you have received has been most grossly unjust, and am free to express my opinion that a simple recognition of your service now is no measure of the debt due to you. In common justice you ought also to be recouped for the fines imposed on you.

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours truly,

(Signed) J. L. H. ELPHINSTONE.

LETTER *from* SIR HERBERT EDWARDES, K.C.B.

14, Leinster Terrace, Hyde Park, W.
January 22nd, 1868.

MY DEAR TAYLER,—

My view of the Mutiny of 1857 is, *bond fide*, that it was a military mutiny, and not a rebellion of the people. But broad statements on such large subjects can never be strictly correct; and there is no doubt the sepoy mutiny was aggravated very greatly, *though in no way caused*, by popular disaffection, in two particular instances.

1stly, the fanatical Wahabee section of the Mahomedans in your Bengal province; and—

2ndly, the people of Oude: where Mr. Gubbins's revenue policy had alienated the chiefs; and the mutiny of the sepoys of course carried with it the sympathy of their fathers, brothers, and sons, the agriculturists; so that *there* we had no friends.

• These two exceptions of civil elements in the war cannot be denied by any impartial man; but I regard them entirely as *exceptions*, and maintain that if the war of 1857 had been a rebellion of a discontented people, none of us would have been here this day to talk about it.

What concerns you personally, however, is not the *imperial* but the *provincial* question. The Wahabee trials of 1864, at Umballa, and 1865, at Patna, disclosed—or rather brought to judicial proof, in courts of law, before

the whole of India—what had only been imperfectly known previously, and most unaccountably pooh-poohed and smothered by the Bengal Government, *viz.*, that for *years* the Wahabee followers of Syed Ahmed had spread a net-work of propagandism over the Bengal province—1stly, to restore the purity of Islam in India ; and 2ndly, as a logical consequence, to undermine and subvert the infidel power of the English.

The centre of this truly bitter and formidable political conspiracy was Patna. You lived there, and knew what was going on. You acted on your knowledge, and paralysed the whole of the Wahabee sect, by seizing their leaders at the very moment when they could and would have struck a heavy blow against us. The Bengal Government was determined not to believe in the Wahabee conspiracy, and punished you for your vigour. Time has done you justice ; shown that you were right ; and hanged or transported the enemies whom you suspected and disarmed.

I hope sincerely that the Home Government of India will complete the hearing of the appeal, and acknowledge that you rendered good service to the State.

I have found the record of the trial of the Wahabee conspirators, in my court, in 1864, but it was unbound, and I was obliged to send it to the binder's. You shall have it as soon as I can get it back.

Yours truly,

(Signed) HERBERT B. EDWARDES.

For WM. TAYLER, Esq.

LETTER from SIR R. MONTGOMERY, K.C.B., late Lieut.-
Governor of the Punjab.

7, Cornwall Gardens, Queen's Gate, W.,
February 7th.

MY DEAR SIR,

Sir Andrew Waugh had given me your *Patna Crisis* to read, and I perused it with great pleasure.

It showed that you had quickly appreciated the circumstances of the Mutiny, and that you acted with great vigour, and in so doing checked the spirit of disaffection which was ready to burst forth at Patna.

The Sitana campaign in 1863, the result of the Wahabee intrigues of Patna, and also the subsequent trials at Amballa, showed the animus of the Wahabee leaders resident at that place.

The Mutiny in 1857, though a military one, was deeper seated than that arising from purely military feelings. There was a deep feeling of dissatisfaction throughout India at many of our acts. This encouraged the sepoys, and large masses sympathised with them, and would at once have joined them, but for the vigour displayed by British officers at the crisis, and which kept them down till the population saw that the sepoys had lost.

I believe myself that the annexation of Oude was the

crowning point of disaffection and *exasperation*, that it led the sepoy to mutiny. The mass of the sepoy, as you are aware, came from that province.

I am,

Yours truly, -

R. MONTGOMERY.

LETTER from T. PARRY WOODCOCK, Esq., *Retired Bengal
Civil Service.*

3, Westminster Chambers, February 15th.

DEAR SIR,

I have read with great interest the several pamphlets you were good enough to leave with me; and I have risen from their perusal with a deep sense of the injuries consistently and perseveringly heaped upon you, and with a profound hope that truth will (it must!) prevail, and that you will meet with the just reward, however tardily, which the ability, courage, and energy you have exerted in your country's cause have so well deserved.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

T. PARRY WOODCOCK.

P.S.—I take this opportunity of mentioning that, meeting Major-General Sir William Hill, K.S.I. (lately rewarded for his services in India), and referring to *your* case, he said at once that he had always understood that your public conduct on the occasion had saved the city and province of Patna!

WILLIAM TAYLER, Esq.

LETTER *from the* HON. GERALD TALBOT, *late Private*
Secretary to Lord Canning.

India Office, February 19th, 1868.

MY DEAR TAYLER,

I am duly in receipt of your note of the 17th, asking me if I object to put in writing, with liberty to you to produce it if needful, what I have verbally said to you touching your case, and my impression of what would have been Lord Canning's action, had he known what has now come to light in the matter.

I can, of course, have no sort of objection to repeat what is a very *sincere conviction*, that if Lord Canning had seen the papers which you now have to produce, and been made acquainted with the subsequent progress of events, he would most likely have changed his opinion as to the treatment you have experienced ; and if he had changed his opinion, a man of his noble character would have been forward to say so, and to do you justice.

Anything that I could say of myself would be of little value ; for I was almost a stranger in *India*, though old in tropical service, and so many years have elapsed that the details of your case,—so far as, being attached to Lord Canning's Staff, I necessarily became acquainted with them,—have nearly escaped me ; indeed, I should not have known them had not, as you know, the Governor-General's private secretary very different functions from officers holding similar positions in this

country ; but I do remember thinking that you had met with hard treatment, which I expressed to more than one member of the Government of the day.

I will endeavour to ascertain and let you know when we went up country in 1858.

Believe me, my dear Tayler,

With every good wish,

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) GERALD TALBOT.

W. TAYLER, Esq.

LETTER from T. PARRY WOODCOCK, ESQ., *Retired*
Bengal Civil Service.

3, Westminster Chambers, S. W., March 3rd.

DEAR TAYLER,

IN compliance with your request, I have obtained from Dr. Paton a written account of the circumstance I mentioned to you regarding the connection of the Patna Mahommedans with the mutiny, which you are at liberty to make use of any way you desire.

I am, &c.,

T. PARRY WOODCOCK.

4, Onslow Square, S. W., March 3rd, 1868.

MY DEAR WOODCOCK,

In proof of Patna having been a *focus* of rebellion in connection with the mutiny of the Bengal Army in 1857, I may mention the following facts, which were verbally communicated to me by the late lamented Brigadier-General Nicolson.

When the outbreak at Meerut and Delhi was telegraphed to Peshawur, it was considered of vital importance to examine the correspondence of the sepoy's passing through the Post Office; and amongst many letters bearing on disaffection, there was one in particular, from a syndicate at Patna to a sepoy of the 64th Regiment then at Peshawur. It was a reply to a letter asking for instructions as to *how* the "mem logue" * should be disposed of on the troops mutinying. The instructions given were to the effect that the "mem logue" might be disposed of as the sepoy's liked. The sepoy was sent for, and confessed that he had written the letter to which the one in question was a reply. The Brigadier remarked to me that a more *fiendish* countenance he never had beheld, and that he was eventually punished as summarily as the time and place rendered necessary.

Yours, &c.,

T. Parry Woodcock, Esq.

G. PATON.

* "Mem logue," i.e. ladies.—W. T.

LETTER *from* GENERAL SIR JOHN LOW, K.C.B., *late*
Member of the Supreme Council in India.

1, Onslow Square, March 24th, 1868.

MY DEAR TAYLER,

I have read the several papers that you have sent for my perusal with deep interest. That feeling of interest has been, to some extent, of a painful kind to me, personally. I allude now to the accusation against you, of having written to Major Eyre, to urge him not to advance direct against the rebels then surrounding Arrah; because I well remember my having, as a member of Lord Canning's Council, concurred with his Lordship in the censure which he passed upon your conduct on that point;—it is true, however, that even now, considering the sort of information that was then before the Council, I think it was quite a natural decision for us to record that censure; but it has since been proved—incontestibly proved—that the data on which that decision was based were quite incorrect! And if I had been still in India when the real fact was laid before the Supreme Council, that your letter was only an unofficial one, not addressed to Major Eyre at all, but to Mr. Bax, in answer to an unofficial one from him, and sent open by you to General Lloyd, for the latter to deal with as he might think fit, I feel sure that I would readily have stated officially

that matter respecting Major Eyre, which to my mind, at that time, was by far the most serious accusation against you. I say this chiefly in justice to *myself*, because my testimony on that point can be of no value to you, after the complete and, to you, the very honourable approbation of your measures, that was, as I find, recorded in a despatch from the Court of Directors in Leadenhall Street.

In regard to the terrible insurrection against us in 1857, I have always thought that, although our Hindoo Sepoys were the most numerous of our *active* enemies, yet that by far the most *dangerous* enemies—being the most persevering, the most able, and the most influential—were Mahomedans; just as was the case at Vellore, Hyderabad, and Kurnool, during the early part of my experience in India; and the despatch from the Court of Directors, describing the peculiar difficulties and importance of your position at Patna; the public trials of the Patna Wahabee conspirators by Sir Herbert Edwardes, and his late letter to you,—all combine to prove indisputably (at least that is my honest opinion) that you had to deal with the most dangerous of all our Mahomedan enemies in 1857.

From the clear light that since that time has been thrown upon the conduct of Patna Mahomedans during that eventful year, and before it, and also subsequent to it, I am decidedly of opinion that those Wahabee chiefs and their relatives were more dangerous to us than Feroze Shah, Khan Buhadur Khan of Bareilly, and any thousand of our *Sepoy* Mahomedans, all put together! I sincerely believe that your skilful and vigorous management of the disaffected population of Patna, was of *immense* value to the Government of

missionership, commencing with the arrest of the three Wahabee conspirators, and the disarming of the greater portion of the inhabitants of the Patna city, your services were of more vital importance to the public interests than those of many officers, both civil and military, during the whole period of their Indian career, in less critical times, who have been rewarded—and justly rewarded—by honours from the Queen; while your services, by an extraordinary combination of unlucky circumstances, have hitherto been so overlooked. In Oriental phrase, “what more need I write?”

Believe me,

My dear Tayler,

To be,

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) J. LOW.

For W. TAYLER, Esq.,
&c., &c., &c.

LETTER *from* GENERAL LE G. JACOB, C. B.

22, *Sussex Gardens, Hyde Park, W.*,
April 2nd, 1868.

MY DEAR SIR,

You ask my opinion on the papers you sent me to read, and on the state of the dangers with which you had to deal, as far as my experience may throw any light on the subject.

I am sorry to say that I am so ill, hovering as it were between life and death, as to be unable to do justice either to you or to myself; and I must perforce limit myself to a few remarks :—

Your papers leave no room for two opinions. There appears nothing to justify the astounding folly of removing you at so critical a period of the storm, and intrusting the helm to steersmen shown to have believed in the good faith of the wreckers.

The dangers that you so admirably nipped in the bud were not confined to your quarter of the world, as Sir Herbert Edwards and others assume; they were part of a network of conspiracy, spread over the length and breadth of India. We had abundance of them on our side, but happily we had a governor equal to the crisis, who, so far from thwarting his subordinate agents, did

everything to inspire them to prompt and vigorous action. Hence, the fires that here and there, from time to time, burst forth, were extinguished almost as soon as lighted; and the scattered firebrands were everywhere hunted down, with an energy and promptitude fully successful; and which therefore has received the reward of public silence, or the assertion in high quarters that there was nothing to do.

One of our most mischievous conspirators, a Wahabee Moulvee—was so subtle and deep, that though some of his disciples were executed, he escaped, with a couple of years' detention as a state prisoner; he had correspondence all over our presidency,—how far it may have extended out of it, was not discovered,—but the ramifications of the Hindoo conspiracy were proved to have spread wide and deep through the land. Chimmasahib received a silver-mounted sword from Lucknow, and the Hindoo and Mahomedan conspirators blended harmoniously together.

You have the consolation of suffering with a goodly company of martyrs: Columbus was sent home in chains, Lally was beheaded, and now recently Governor Eyre has been punished and persecuted. It seems the fate of genius to draw down upon its head the forked lightning—jealousy, timidity, and ignorance, rolled into one.

As the present Government has always shown a desire to govern India righteously, I have hope that it will afford you redress. If Sir Stafford Northcote have an honest heart, he cannot read your papers without a sense of indignation at the treatment of one who did so much to meet the horrors of the great rebellion.

Yours faithfully,

LE. G. JACOB.

P.S.—Lords Canning and Elphinstone's premature death, broken down by their incessant and anxious labours, has allowed much injustice to be continued, which, had they lived, they were too high-minded to have connived at within their respective ranges.